

Message Text

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ORIGIN AF-08

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TAGS:PFOR, ET, US

SUBJECT:PRESS GUIDANCE ON KAGNEW STATION CLOSURE

1. DURING TESTIMONY MARCH 30 ON FY 78 SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BEFORE AFRICA SUBCOMMITTEE OF HFRC, MEMBERS OF PRESS MAY HAVE LEARNED OF OFF-THE-RECORD REMARKS BY ASSISTANT SECRETARY SEELYE THAT U.S. IS GIVING SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO CLOSING KAGNEW STATION IN SEPTEMBER, 1977 UPON TERMINATION OF THE AGREEMENT. THIS HAS NOT YET SURFACED IN PRESS HERE BUT IT MAY WELL.

2. PRESS GUIDANCE FOR USE IN WASHINGTON IS AS FOLLOWS:

Q: IS THERE ANY PLAN TO CLOSE KAGNEW STATION, THE NAVAL COMMUNICATIONS UNIT AT ASMARA, ETHIOPIA?

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A: WE ARE NOW EXAMINING THAT POSSIBILITY IN LIGHT OF NEW TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES WHICH COULD MAKE KAGNEW REDUNDANT. NO TIME HAS YET BEEN SET FOR WHEN CLOSURE WILL BE POSSIBLE.

Q: HOW MANY AMERICANS ARE NOW AT KAGNEW?

A: KAGNEW HAS BEEN GREATLY SCALED DOWN FROM ITS FORMER SIZE OF OVER 3,000 TO 35. THERE ARE 12 NAVAL PERSONNEL

AND 23 CIVILIANS. DUE TO THE LOCAL SECURITY SITUATION, ALL DEPENDENTS WERE WITHDRAWN EARLY LAST YEAR.

Q: DOES THE POSSIBLE CLOSURE HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH OUR RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA OR THE SECURITY SITUATION IN ERITREA?

A: IT DOES NOT, THE REASON IS TECHNOLOGICAL.

Q: HAVE THERE BEEN ANY U.S. CASUALTIES AT KAGNEW?

A: IN 1974-76 A TOTAL OF FIVE AMERICAN CITIZEN CONTRACT EMPLOYEES OF COLLINS INTERNATIONAL WERE KIDNAPPED BY ERITREAN SECESSIONIST FORCES AND WERE SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED UNHARMED. TWO AMERICAN EMPLOYEES WERE KILLED IN 1975 WHEN THEIR JEEP STRUCK A MINE.

CHRISTOPHER

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